

**HOW TO**

# **Participate in Environmental Decision Making**



**IDEM**



## Do you want...

- ▶ **To take part in decisions that affect your neighborhood's environment?**
- ▶ **To know if factories, other businesses or new development in your town are hurting the environment?**
- ▶ **To know how to get information and make your voice heard?**

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) has published two citizens' guides to let people know how their voices can be heard when it comes to decisions that affect the environment in their neighborhoods.

If you want to follow the progress of a local project that could affect your environment, or if you want to support or oppose it, **IDEM's Guide for Citizen Participation** can help you. It is available, at no cost, in both print and electronic formats. To order a copy, call (317) 233-6335 or (800) 451-6027, Ext. 3-6335. To view it on the Internet, visit IDEM's Web site at [www.in.gov/idem/guides/publicparticipation/](http://www.in.gov/idem/guides/publicparticipation/).

There is also a shorter version of the guide, **Getting Involved in Environmental Decision Making**, that provides basic information. It is also available in print by calling the above phone numbers, and it is located at the above Web address.

There are many federal, state and local government offices that are involved with environmental decisions. IDEM's Guide for Citizen Participation lists many of those offices and provides phone numbers and addresses to contact them.



Photo by Stephen Sellers - DNR

This brochure addresses some of the most frequently asked questions and concerns about participating in environmental decision making.

# Citizen Participation in Environmental Decisions

## *Frequently Asked Questions and Concerns*

**1 I heard that a manufacturing company is going to build a plant in my neighborhood. How can I make sure that it won't ruin the air, kill the fish in our creek, or trash the area with hazardous waste?**

A company that will produce more than minimal amounts of air pollution must get a permit from IDEM before construction starts. Based on state and federal rules and information provided by the company, the permit will describe the types and quantities of air pollutants that the facility will be allowed to emit. The permit will only be issued if IDEM determines that the plant will not violate national air quality standards. A company that will be discharging water into a public waterway must get a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. For larger facilities, citizens may review the draft permits during a 30 day public comment period before the permits are issued. Citizens may explain to IDEM any objections they have, and IDEM will consider those comments when preparing the final permits. All draft and issued air permits are available to read/print on IDEM's Web site at <http://www.in.gov/idem/air/permits/Air-Permits-Online/index.html>, and all permits can also be read/copied at:

**IDEM Public File Room**  
Room 1201  
Indiana Government Center North  
100 N. Senate Avenue  
Indianapolis, IN 46206  
(800) 451-6027



A company that produces more than 220 pounds of hazardous waste per month, or more than 2.2 pounds of acutely hazardous waste per month, must register with

IDEM under the

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Program. The company is required to properly handle its hazardous waste. You can see a list of the facilities that produce hazardous wastes, the quantities of wastes they produce, and company reports that describe how the hazardous wastes were handled, on these Web sites: <http://www.in.gov/idem/land/community/lists.html> and <http://www.in.gov/idem/land/hazwaste/brs/biennial.html>.

For detailed information about any of these concerns, please refer to IDEM's Guide for Citizen Participation. You may also call the following offices for more information about air, water, and hazardous waste pollution:

- **Office of Air Quality**  
(317) 233-0178  
(800) 451-6027, Ext. 3-0178
- **Office of Water Quality**  
(317) 232-8670  
(800) 451-6027, Ext. 2-8670
- **Office of Land Quality**  
(317) 234-0338  
(800) 451-6027, Ext. 4-0338



**2 An old chemical manufacturing plant in our town recently went out of business. We can see big areas of chemical spills on the ground. We would like the old buildings to be removed so that the land could be converted to a playground or shopping area. How could that happen with so much contamination on the ground?**

There are many state and federal programs that can help convert a “brownfield” site to a productive property. Such programs include: CERCLA (i.e., Superfund), the State Environmental Cleanup Program (i.e., RISC), the Voluntary Remediation Program, the Leaking Underground Storage Tank Program, the Brownfields Program, and many others, depending upon the situation. For more information about public participation in brownfields development, please refer to IDEM’s Guide for Citizen Participation at <http://www.in.gov/idem/guides/publicparticipation> and the Brownfields Redevelopment Resource Guide, at <http://www.in.gov/idem/land/brownfields/index.html>, or call (317) 233-6335 or (800) 451-



6027, Ext. 3-6335 to receive printed copies of the guides. To talk with IDEM staff about brownfields, please call (317) 233-2570, or (800) 451-6027,



**3 Ext. 3-2570. There is a wooded ravine at the edge of the city that is slowly filling with old kitchen**

**appliances, worn tires, and oil drums. Should we contact city, county, state, or federal offices to find out if dumping trash into the ravine is legal?**

It sounds like the ravine is being used as an illegal dump, which is probably violating local, as well as state and federal rules. To find out if the site is a permitted landfill, you may see the list of permitted solid waste facilities on IDEM’s Web site at <http://www.in.gov/idem/land/community/lists.html>.

To report an illegal dump, please contact your county health department and also file a pollution complaint form with IDEM, available at (317) 232-4464 or (800) 451-6027, Ext. 2-4464 or on IDEM’s Web site at <http://www.in.gov/idem/pollutioncomplaints/>.

More information about solid waste disposal can be obtained from your solid waste management district office and IDEM’s Guide for Citizen Participation.

**4 It seems that my neighborhood attracts all sorts of polluting industries. Some of them smell bad and create noisy truck traffic. Some of them operate for a short time and then leave, without taking their garbage with them. There are many minority and low-income residents in my neighborhood, and we think it is unfair that we must live with these conditions while other non-minority and higher income neighborhoods do not have these problems. What can we do to improve the situation?**



IDEM has adopted an Environmental Justice Strategic Plan, which has as its vision statement that “No citizens or communities of the State of Indiana, regardless of race, color, national origin, income, or geographic location, will bear a disproportionate share of the risk and consequences of environmental pollution or will be denied equal access to environmental benefits.”

If you are concerned that your community is disproportionately burdened, please contact IDEM Environmental Justice staff at (317) 234-0435 or (800) 451-6027, Ext. 4-0435. Staff will review the situation and work with community members, government agencies, and industries to analyze the environmental burden and ensure that all stakeholders are fully involved in any environmental decision making relevant to their neighborhoods.

**5 Our city is discussing the possibility of building a new sewage treatment plant. I know that some new sewage treatment plants do not function well and smell very bad. How can I provide input to the decision for the new sewage plant?**

The construction of a new sewage treatment plant requires that the city apply for a wastewater facility construction permit. IDEM’s Office of Water Quality (OWQ) will complete its review of the permit application within 90 days of receipt. When the permit is issued, it may be appealed within 15 days. Therefore, the opportunity for early public participation would be greatest at the “city level” of planning, prior to permit application. Your city may have planning meetings for the sewer project, and those meetings should be open to the public so that you can learn details about the proposed system. You may also wish to ask your city officials to hold a public meeting to listen to the concerns and suggestions of city residents.



Photo courtesy of Union City WWTP

For more information about wastewater facilities and the opportunity for public input, please see IDEM’s Guide for Citizen Participation. To talk with IDEM staff about sewage treatment plants, please call (317) 232-8670 or (800) 451-6027, Ext. 2-8670.

**6 There are specific rules and laws related to the environment that I don't agree with. I would like to hear about them before they become "law" so I have a chance to oppose them. How can I participate?**



There are four environmental boards that adopt environmental rules. You may attend board meetings or read the meeting minutes to learn about proposed

rules. Concerns and suggestions related to proposed rules are usually submitted in writing or in person during public comment periods and public hearings for rule adoption. You may learn more about the boards and their meeting schedules by phone and on the Internet:

- **Air Pollution Control Board**  
(317) 233-0426 or [www.in.gov/idem/air/rules/apcbdes/index.html](http://www.in.gov/idem/air/rules/apcbdes/index.html)
- **Solid Waste Management Board**  
(317) 232-7995 or <http://www.in.gov/idem/land/rules/swmb/>
- **Water Pollution Control Board**  
(317) 233-8903 or [www.in.gov/idem/water/planbr/rules/wpcbmembers.html](http://www.in.gov/idem/water/planbr/rules/wpcbmembers.html)
- **Underground Storage Tank Financial Assurance Board**  
(317) 234-0341 or <http://www.in.gov/idem/land/eltf/fab/index.html>

Please consult IDEM's Guide for Citizen Participation for details about how to participate in rule making processes.

**7 Sometimes I wonder how many industrial facilities are located in the large neighborhood around my house. Is there any way I can see the "whole picture" of my neighborhood and the facilities that might be affecting my environment?**

"The whole picture" is being shown in greater detail every day.



IDEM maintains a computer mapping system that can mark the locations of many industrial facilities on neighborhood maps. It can also show locations of Superfund sites, air pollution monitoring stations, landfills, etc. The mapping system contains U.S. Census information to show income and race

characteristics of neighborhoods. IDEM is using the maps to identify areas that may be unfairly burdened with environmental problems.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency maintains a similar mapping system, Enviromapper, that can be used on IDEM's Web site at [www.in.gov/idem/communityinfo/zip.html](http://www.in.gov/idem/communityinfo/zip.html). At this site, you can look at a map of your neighborhood and see the locations of many of the industrial facilities that are there.

Maps from IDEM and EPA do not contain all of the sites that could affect a neighborhood's environment, but the mapping systems are periodically updated to provide the best information available in map form.



For a copy of **IDEM's Guide for Citizen Participation**, or the **shorter version**, call (317) 232-8611 or (800) 451-6027, Ext. 2-8611. Both guides are also available on IDEM's Web site at **<http://www.in.gov/idem/guides/publicparticipation>**.

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